



ADRIANA RADU 2019-12-18

## CLIMATE CRISIS AND SELF-CRITIQUE: “WE THRIVE UNINVITED WHERE WE WERE NEVER MEANT TO GROW.”

GENERICSCIENCE CAPITALOCENE, CLIMATE CRISIS, CO2, SELF-CRITIQUE

*The man made catastrophe called climate change is already a reality for many people. This catastrophe hits those hardest, who have the least capacities of adapting to it – and the least responsibility of creating it. Given this situation, how can we cooperate across borders to tackle the climate crisis? That was the initial question of Berliner Gazette's MORE WORLD conference. The author and YouTuber Adriana Radu shares her impressions.*

I have the mind and the education for it. But I only truly began to believe in climate change this June. This summer I was invited to travel to a global women's rights conference called Women Deliver, which was held in Vancouver, Canada. I studied Public Health and for the last six years, I have been running Sex vs The Stork, Romania's most popular YouTube channel on feminism, sexual education and reproductive health. Vancouver was my first long haul flight alone.

As we flew over Northern Canada, I saw endless kilometers of ice massively melting. I remember thinking to myself “Don't exaggerate, it's June.” Then, a few days later the news about massive meltdowns in Greenland and the thawing of the permafrost. For the first time, a switch went on inside my brain.

### **We messed it up**

A few weeks ago, I stepped out the plane and my phone rang. I picked up and heard my father's voice. He told me my grandmother died while I was in the sky between Berlin and Bucharest. I am 30. But I only truly began to believe in death this October.

When I am at the beginning of a difficult task, there is a split of a second where I decide whether I will ace it in 5 minutes or drag it on for 5 days or 5 months. Climate change and (our) death belong to the latter. I am sure I am not alone in slouching towards accepting what is. So I keep going to conferences.

It was my fifth time at the Berliner Gazette yearly conference, which celebrated its 20th birthday. This year, we came together in some compassion. We came together to mourn. A bunch of adults mourning our loss of innocence. Childish Gambino once said that he never understood why Holden Caulfield only realised that the world is shit when he was 15, because as a black kid in

America, you get that memo very early. So we're probably a bit late realising how we messed up the world.

Still, we met to mourn for our mortality. These are shards of what was shared and pierced my mind most.

### **The situation of climate exiles**

Sujatha Byravan (India), whose pioneering research explores the politics of climate refugees, made a few basic points clear. People are already on the move and more will follow: 10 to hundreds of millions. It tends to be invisible, because sometimes a person think they are moving from a place to another one for a job, when the real reason would be climate change. Most migration will be national, as in happened with Hurricane Katrina, when around 270 000 moved to different parts of the US, with only the poor to stay.

That climate change is already upon us is obvious from the draught in Syria, the heatwaves in Russia and Africa, the situation in Tapachula, Mexico. Climate change causes shortage of water or rising seas. Either way, pro borders right wing government sow the seeds and we've had pacific islands people already being denied access to Australia. Everywhere, the people least responsible for greenhouse gases are the most affected.

350 parts/million used to be considered a safe carbon dioxide thresh-hold for life on earth. Keep the values below that and the planet could make it. But we are already at 450. And the Greenland glaciers that melted in June did not wait until 2070 to break down as planned.

Byravan spoke about how we need to accept the radical reality that we are now in the middle of an ecological and climate crisis. It's here. I know it's hard to believe. I write this and don't want to believe it.

In her view, the problems of the antropocene are the problems of the capitolocene. In light of that, she envisions some solutions: putting the rights of migrants at the center, whatever the reason they are moving, sustainable development and equity at local, regional and transnational level; shared/regional labor policies for free movement, training skills for the people who might have to move; developing shared values, a new sense of identity, a shift away from consumerism.

### **The emerging eco-fascism**

Canadian researcher Harsha Walia, a Berliner Gazette conference veteran, brought her stellar clarity and knowledge to make further important points on climate change and migration. One important point is that climate migrants and climate exiles are not protected by the 1951 Geneva refugee convention. Made post-Holocaust and without taking in account the dissolution of the empires, the convention did not include climate or economic refugees.

In the broad definition of refugees, around the world, one person is displaced every single hour. Since 2016, new displacements caused by climate changes outnumbered three to one those caused by persecution. The largest climate displacement in the world is lived in Bangladesh, a country that, since the 90's, under the guidance of the IMF and the World Bank, has started massive deforestation and rice and shrimps crops.

In Walia's view, climate displacement cannot be separate from other types of displacement, as climate displacement and climate change are rooted in imperialism and capitalism. Similarly, no one is actually a climate change denier. "Climate change deniers" is a political ideology to keep pursuing extraction and green grabs (land grabbing iteration of colonialism). Climate change denial cannot be brought to the truth: they know the truth but it is an attempt to deny people from minority communities and from the global south equity.

She sees a growing eco-fascism, that aims to militarize the borders in order to hoard food in the global north, despite the fact that people will migrate mostly locally. At the same time, she cites the new Global Compact for migration, a document whose central pillar in climate migration is facilitating labour mobility for temporary, seasonal and fast track labourers. So, for her, the displaced people become another funnel into the capitalism machine.

For Walia, the right to stay and the right to move are equally important, and both should be fought for. Dignified migration is not just open borders, but rethinking the imperial world. A form of redistribution.

### **The future doesn't wait**

18 year old German Clara Mayer from Fridays for Future had the courage to be vulnerable and tell us how she wrote and re-wrote the speech she was to hold to Volkswagen shareholders. She got there thanks to shareholder activists who buy shares in order to facilitate access to company internal high level events. She was nervous and almost did not make it on stage because of more last minute rewrites. Yet her speech made it into the German national newspapers.

Anja Kanngieser was the person from whom I first learned about The Republic of Kiribati. Made out of 32 atolls, home to about 100 000 people, it's touched each day by powerful tidal waves in the Pacific Ocean. Already, people have had to abandon their homes. The Republic of Kiribati is the first country in the world that will disappear under the ocean because of climate change.

In her artistic audio work, children playing on the main atom of Kiribati voiced this year's Venezia Bienalle Lithuanian pavilion Sun&Sea (Marina) beach in letting us know: the day of the end of the world will sound like any other day.

## We cannot linger

I am left most inspired by a performance by the performance “Order of the immortal stranger” by the collective “University of the Phoenix. In it, children of the future escaped the adults that have caused a climate catastrophe. They are protected and helped by an African plant called THE IMMORTAL STRANGER, that helped the kids communicate with children from other communities and liberate themselves.

THE FREE CHILDREN grow only to have children of their own, and live by the following teachings:

We thrive uninvited where we were never meant to grow. / Their waste is our teacher. / We use our lifetime to transform their ruins into our home. / We will live long enough to make more children and then die. / Die and become an ancestor. / Let us learn to die. To become on another's soil. /Never not time to learn to die.

So let us mourn the fact that we will die, but let's not lie to ourselves that we won't.

*Check out the results from the MORE WORLD project! In discussions, talks, performances, and workshops participants from more than 30 countries tried to find out how we can work together across borders to counter the climate crisis. The extensive resources generated at the conference include audios, videos, and projects. All of the results can be found on this website: <https://more-world.berlinergazette.de>*

*Check out the German version of this text here: <https://berlinergazette.de/klimawandel-und-selbstkritik>*

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